NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-5596 MARCH 9, 1978
BUI TUAN

THAILAND AND THE 200-MILE FISHING ZONE

ANNCR:

THAILAND -- ONE OF THE FEW COUNTRIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA THAT HAS NOT IMPOSED A 200-MILE FISHING ZONE IN ITS TERRITORIAL WATERS -- IS PROMOTING A REGIONAL PACT WHICH WOULD RESOLVE FISHING DISPUTES IN THAT PART OF THE WORLD. VOA'S BUI TUAN HAS DETAILS IN THIS BACKGROUND REPORT.

VOICE:

BURMA, MALAYSIA, INDONESIA AND VIETNAM HAVE JOINED OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD IN IMPOSING TWO-HUNDRED FISHING ZONES. EVEN TOKELAU -- A CHAIN OF TINY ISLANDS BELONG TO NEW ZEALAND -- HAS DONE SO, DESPITE THE FACT THAT IT HAS TO POLICE THE ZONE IN CANOES. BUT, IN THAILAND, FORMER PRIME MINISTER THANIN KRAIVICHIEN VOWED THAT HIS COUNTRY WOULD BE ONE OF THE LAST TO ESTABLISH THE 200-MILE ZONE. AND THAILAND STILL OBSERVES A THREE-MILE TERRITORIAL WATERS LIMIT. BUT THE NEW GOVERNMENT OF GENERAL KRIANGSAK CHAMANAND HAS INDICATED THAT IT'S GIVING SERIOUS THOUGHT TO EXTENDING THE FISHING ZONES. FOLLOWING CAMBODIA'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF AN EXTENDED ECONOMIC ZONE, THAI OFFICIALS HELD DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR, INCLUDING THE THAI FISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATION, AS WELL AS WITH EXPERTS FROM THE UNITED NATIONS FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION (FAO) ON THE ADVISABILITY OF FOLLOWING THE CAMBODIAN EXAMPLE.

BANGKOK'S RELUCTANCE TO ENLARGEN THAILAND'S FISHING ZONE IS PROMPTED IN LARGE PART BY THE FACT THAT PORTIONS OF THE ANDAMAN SEA AND THE SOUTH CHINA SEA CONTIGUOUS TO THE THAI COAST ARE TOO NARROW TO ALLOW NEIGHBORING BURMA, MALAYSIA AND CAMBODIA TO HAVE A SEPARATE ECONOMIC ZONE.

INSTEAD, THE BANGKOK GOVERNMENT HAS CALLED UPON BURMA, MALAYSIA, INDONESIA, SRI LANKA, BANGLADESH AND INDIA TO JOIN IN A REGIONAL FISHING COOPERATIVE, WHICH, AMONG OTHER THINGS, WOULD PROVIDE FOR SHARING FISHING PROFITS ON FISH TAKEN IN SOUTHEAST ASIAN WATERS. IN THE MEANTIME, THAILAND HAS SIGNED SEPARATE FISHING AGREEMENTS WITH BANGLADESH AND INDIA. MANY THAI FISHERMEN DETAINED IN BANGLADESH HAVE BEEN RELEASED AS PART OF THE NEW FISHING AGREEMENT, AND BANGKOK IS NOW SEEKING THE RELEASE OF THAI FISHERMEN DETAINED IN CAMBODIA.

DEPUTY AGRICULTURE MINISTER APHON SIPHIPHAT TOLD NEWSMEN IN BANGKOK THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WILL SHORTLY BEGIN TALKS WITH INDONESIA, VIETNAM, BURMA AND CAMBODIA TO NEGOTIATE SIMILAR FISHING PACTS. ALSO, LATER THIS MONTH, A THAI DELEGATION WILL TRAVEL TO KUALA LUMPUR TO TAKE PART IN TALKS WITH MALAYSIAN OFFICIALS ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF FORMAL FISHING ZONES FOR THAI AND MALAYSIAN FISHERMEN.

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